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Late Marriage among Working Females: Crossroads between Islamic Thought & Contemporary Socio-economic Theoretical Frameworks

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ABSTRACT

According to Islamic, social and microeconomic theories, marriage is the most important part of any society. It not only creates sense of belongingness but at the same time it helps out at the time of social and financial issues. In current era, marriage timings are changing in adults due to cost benefit, game theory and demand supply concepts. Male and female are both influenced by their surrounding environment which affects their marriage timing. Male were considered more conscious about the selection of female partner, but now females are also more conscious about the selection of their partner. Female do more cost benefit analysis and see their demands about spouse and the supply of that quality's holder in the market. But on the other hand gender base organizations, materialistic, biologist and sociologist criticized these concepts. According to them not only economic factors but other factors like feminism encourages late marriage because they demand women freedom and they try to make females realized that to make their career is the right of every woman. According to materialistic perspective, people are now more brand conscious and status conscious. They want more and more whether they need that thing or not. The Biologists believe that the human body is like a machine which needs care and time for relaxation. The criticism from sociologist was that to run a society in a proper or peaceful way, marriage institution is really very important for the sustainable society.

Key words: Cost Benefit, Game Theory, Demand Supply, Materialistic, Feminist, Sustainable Society

Introduction

Marriage is amongst the most extremely valued forms of human association¹. Marriage is one of the elementary social institutions which have its starting point in pre-history of human beings and according to Murdock marriage exists in one form or the other in every society². In every culture marriage has some significant functions for individuals as well as for societies. For individuals, it diminishes the feeling of alienation³ and plays an important role in the emotional satisfaction of spouses⁴.

Marriage has turned out to be an increasingly significant subject in academic and policy research. A growing literature proposes that marriage has an extensive range of benefits including progress



in economic, mental and physical well-being of individuals, as well as the well-being of their children⁵.

Marriage has turned out to be less of a financial need for women, who are now capable to undertake paid work outside the home leading to their increasing substantial independence and capability to form separate households. Along with this, there have been noticeable changes in attitude of people regarding marriage in recent years⁶ and the choices offered to individuals and couples have now become more wide-ranging. As a result, very small number of people are getting married. The decline in the status of marriage points out that 'no longer is marriage seen as the only unifying principle for relationships'⁷.

Factors that are leading to late marriage in females

The exchange of payments and goods between families of bride and bridegroom can be easily seen in today's world. This trend is not only followed in developing countries but also being practiced in developed countries⁸. Not only dowry is the reason behind late marriages of females but some other factors such as, career building of female, higher education, parents' choice towards the selection of soul mate also contributes in delay or late marriage in females. Research findings have revealed the fact that those females who give more preference to their education and career building, they also want to get married with educated male⁹.

On the other hand, another factor that contributes in late marriages of females; is the influence of parents' relation and attitudes towards marriage, of their children.¹⁰ Findings of many researchers have discovered that father's attitude towards marriage influence his children attitude too. If children see a positive attitude of their father towards marriage, then there are more chances that children will also consider marriage an important task and will give importance to it¹¹.

Marriage in Islam

In Islam, marriage is not only a physical or financially supported contract between two individuals, but it is actually a gift from Allah for leading a happy and joy full life and supporting each other in the time of crisis or sorrow. The researchers of Islam have expressed that when Allah expresses an order in the Quran then this order become mandatory on man henceforth marriage is a required demonstration. Marriage makes an inadequate person a complete one. Marriage shields one's imaan (confidence) i.e. it prevents one from submitting such acts by which she/he could be viewed as corrupt. Sins, for example, mingling with individuals of the inverse sex is not acceptable in Islam without having a proper Nikkah. In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty said:

1: "Law full unto you in marriage is not only chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the people of the book revealed before your time"¹²

2: "Do not marry women idolaters until they believe"¹³

3: "And Allah has made for you, your mates of your own nature, and made for you out of them, sons and daughters, and provide for you the best sustenance" ¹⁴

4: "And among His signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that dwell in tranquility with them and He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Undoubtedly, in these are the signs for those who reflect" ¹⁵

5: "And let those who cannot find someone to marry maintain chastity until Allah (SWT) makes them rich through His favors ..." ¹⁶

6: "... and besides these, it is lawful for you to marry other women if you pay them their dowry, maintain chastity and do not commit indecency. So those (women) whom you marry for an appointed time, you must give them their agreed upon dowries. There is no harm if you reach an understanding among yourselves about the dowry, Allah (SWT) is All-Knowing and All-Wise" ¹⁷

7: "And one of His signs is that He has created for you, spouses from amongst yourselves so that you might take comfort in them and He has placed between you, love and mercy. In this there is surely evidence (of the truth) for the people who carefully think" ¹⁸

8: "O' mankind! Have consciousness of your Lord who has created you from a single soul. From it He created your spouse and through them He populated the land with many men and women. Have spiritual awareness of the One by whose Name you swear to settle your differences and have respect for the wombs that bore you. Without doubt, Allah (SWT) keeps watch over you all" ¹⁹

To avoid problems after marriage, the Prophet (PBUH) said that it is the right of men and women that they should meet once before marriage within defined sharia rules. So, if they think after meeting with each other that they can live a better life than they should get married otherwise it is not forceful for them to get married ²⁰.

Parents and other folks should be invited in the ceremony because marriage is actually a new start of the family institution. The groom and bride must be agreed to get married. The proposal and the acceptance should be done in the presence of two witnesses. It is compulsory to give Khutbah (sermon) before the marriage. Dua should be done after the Nikkah. The bridegroom should organize a wedding dinner (Walimmah) to the next day of Nikkah. As much as possible, marriage ceremony should be simple and according to Islamic rules ²¹.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"O, young people! Whoever can marry should marry, as it helps to lower One's gaze, and protects one's private parts, and whoever is not able to marry should fast, as this helps him to protect his private parts (from committing illegal Sexual intercourse) ²²

Significance of the Study

- This study is intended to explore late marriages. So, the findings may inform us about the factors associated with late marriages in Pakistan.
- In Islamic culture late marriages are not desirable. Therefore delay in marriages put tremendous pressure on both the parents and the marriageable individual especially females.

- Additionally, the delay in marriages in case of females is associated with the reduced value of the female in the marriage market.

Research Question

What are those factors which act as an obstacle in the way of working females from entering early in married life?

Objectives

- To identify the socioeconomic factors leading to late marriages.
- To what extent these factors create obstacles in the way of women's marriage.
- To analyze the Islamic perspective about the late marriages of working women.
- To be able to know the contribution of each factor and could find the dominant ones.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The question of marriage timing increased the interest of the media and researchers in the past few years. There is a need to investigate marriage timing because it is affecting the relationship of married couples and increasing the divorce rate²³, especially among those couples who gets married before 20 years of their age²⁴. Moreover, cohabitation is also considered while investigating the marriage timing in adults. According to reports, cohabitation is increasing dramatically and legal contract as marriage is declining in adults²⁵. Similarly, another report revealed that 48% women between 15-44 ages are living with their partner in an illegal relationship²⁶, and at age of 25 half of the adults starts living in an illegal relationship²⁷.

Still there is need to find out those social and economic factors that needs to be addressed because those factors influence the marriage decision and cause delays in marriage (e.g.; income, education attainment, carrier building) as well as family and personal viewpoint (religiosity)²⁸. The available literature highlights some factors that influence the marriage timing. According to²⁹ people only get married early if they belong to a poor family, have uneducated parents, more religious and moreover have a high school diploma. Similarly, demographic and socioeconomic factors also need to be considered while studying marital timings³⁰.

Studies have revealed that parent's severance also affect the feelings of their family³¹. Similarly, according to other reports, couples who divorced in the early age of their children, this situation influence their child's attitude towards marriage³². As a result, the behavior towards marriage and marriage timing is different among those people who suffer from the parental divorced situation rather than those who did not face the painful feeling³³.

Religion may also affect the judgment of its follower's life in special areas such as: occupation, residence³⁴, how many off-springs the couple should have and the time of their marriage³⁵. It is said that the people who are more committed and sincere with their religion, they get married at that age, which is defined by their religion than those who are less committed with their religion³⁶.

Religion also plays a vital role in the timing of marriage. In literature, it is found that migrants and the native people of any country now mostly consider exogamy (marriage in outside ethnic group and nationality) marriages³⁷. Moreover, it is evident that these exogamous marriages are mostly and positively associated with economic stability³⁸. On the other hand, endogamous (marriage within same national, caste and religion of a person)³⁹ creates more sense of solidarity and socioeconomic stability and harmony in society⁴⁰. Similarly studying marriage timing is difficult because most of the migrants come from different backgrounds and norms.

On the other hand, fertility and late marriage are affiliated with education and after that they are associated with place in the job market, especially in females⁴¹.

If choosing a partner and first marriage timing process come under one umbrella than it will not be difficult to understand the position of migrants and their ancestors⁴².

If any migrant gets married according to the endogamous system than the person need to follow the rules and values of the country⁴³. These endogamous and exogamous marriage in migrants, can easily define the social change in societies⁴⁴.

Methodology

Methodology refers to those techniques that are used to investigate any phenomenon or any problem that exists in the society. For this study, researcher used purely secondary data analysis technique in which different research papers and scientific research material is used to analyze the delayed marriage phenomenon among working females. Moreover the researcher used supportive arguments via Quran's verses and Hadith.

Theoretical framework: The Social and Microeconomics of late marriage

Organizational effects and individual mechanism theory

A theory on marriage timing was tested by Scott T. Yabiku in Nepal. Researcher tested this theory in the Chitwan Valley of Nepal, where huge and massive social change came into being. Researcher tested that how individual choices and the interference of other organizations influence the marriage timing in adults. Finding revealed that both individual activities and neighborhood organizations influence the marriage timing in the Chitwan Valley⁴⁵.

Family Dynamic Theory

Family Dynamic Theory given by Murray Bowen in which he defines that in any family its members support each other in terms of social, moral, emotional, mental or economically⁴⁶. All

members are dependent upon each other but at the same time some factors influences family dynamics such as: nature of the parents' relationship, having polite and strict nature parents, numbers of children in family⁴⁷, their influence and participation in decision making process, the 'mix' of members who are living in the same family circle level and type of influence from comprehensive family or others⁴⁸, a constantly unwell or disabled child within the family, actions which have affected family members, such as an affair, separation, mental disturbance, death, joblessness, homelessness or other issues such as family violent behavior, ill-treatment, alcohol use, psychological fitness difficulties⁴⁹, family values, culture and traditions, plus beliefs about gender roles, parenting practices, authority or position of family members, nature of adjunct in family (i.e. protected, timid) dynamics of earlier generations (parents' and grandparents' families) broader systems- societal, economic, political as well as poverty⁵⁰.

Economic Theories

Economic theories of marriage are dealing with different abstract thoughts about marriage timing, the relationship between men and women, tendency of love between the couple and somehow, also dealing with the biological obstacles. To understand these assumptions in economic frame it is necessary to look into micro-economic perspective about marriage and its economically changing pattern. Mostly researchers have used applied micro-economic tools to analyze marriage that is used by the economist to deal with some economic problem within society, such as: game theory, market analysis and cost/benefit analysis⁵¹.

Cost and Benefit analysis theory

The most basic and fundamental theory of Economics is cost and benefit analysis⁵². Cost and benefit can be analyzed and compare in terms of one is trying to search a true love as well as seeing a person who replaces the maid in the house. Men and women both are doing this type of analysis while the time of the search a mate, somehow dynamics may be different, but both are following and using cost and benefit technique⁵³.

Game Theory

Game theory is the second technique that is used by economists and other researchers while analyzing marriage. Game theory is usually applied when behavior of people is mystic or strategic. The aim of this mystic or strategic behavior may be to get married, to fulfill biological or physical needs, the attainment of higher education, to get a financially strong and established spouse/mate, spouse family background at that time the application of game theory can be easily seen⁵⁴.

Market Analysis Theory

Market analysis is usually applied when demand and supply increases in society⁵⁵. The presence of desired commodity increases the competition among its consumer. To get a competitive mate, a cold war can be easily seen around the globe. In marriage market the cold war between male and female is on the priceless commodity in terms of characteristics such as education level, physical and mental appearance, wealth and possessions⁵⁶. In western countries, this phenomenon can be

seen at prom parties, churches and bars. In India it is seen in their newspaper, in which there is a section where they publish with the name of matrimonial about a lot of males and females list who wants to get married. In Korea and Japan the parents of marriageable children circulates the resume of their children in their communities to find the spouse for their marriageable children⁵⁷.

Conclusion

Islam emphasizes on marriage especially on timely marriage because it creates stability and harmony in society. It not only gives opportunity to start a new life but at the same time it generates and create a sense of belongingness and help individuals to cope up with the difficulties of social and economic life. According to microeconomics, in today's world marriage is based on cost benefit, a game and the demand and supply in the market⁵⁸. Male and female, both consider firmly cost and benefit analysis while searching the spouse. Male usually, not only see female as a soul mate, but as a caretaker of his family, but with the passage of time females also do the same analysis while searching the male spouse. Similarly, game theory says that while searching the pattern, male and female, both follow some strategic patterns in terms of attainment of higher education, nuclear family system after marriage, high income etc. On the other hand, supply and demand said the same thing that in the marriage market, a tough competition in selecting the mate. People want a competitive and a compromising life partner. When these things they do not find then demand decreased and supply is also decreased. Supply and demand only increase when people find the desired mate in marriage market⁵⁹. The criticism on microeconomics is seen after the establishment of New Home Economics (NHE) by Becker and Jacob. According to them not only microeconomics pattern, but gender, materialism or biological and social factors also influence marriage timing among adults. Due to globalization, the world is changing so fast. Female prefer to enter into the work force rather than enter into early marriage. Feminist organizations give a lot of booms to this concept that the female has a free choice to make their career rather than enter early in married life. Similarly, materialism also increases in relationship⁶⁰. People judge each other on the basis of which brand they use, where they live rather than giving importance to values and norms. Biologist says that human body is like a machine and every machine have a limit to do work. Human body also needs care and a proper time for relaxation. Sociologists also believe that marriage is an important institution of any society. It brings peace and harmony, which is very important to run functions of any society peacefully and calmly.

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